



1 - Introduction to Family Roots

People traveling Illinois Route 1 in northeast Illinois between St. Anne and either Kankakee or Momence may not realize when they are in Wichert. There is no city or even a small town with boundaries that can be recognized as Wichert. Travelers unfamiliar with the area likely view Wichert as a long stretch of farmland, like so many long stretches of farmland along highways in northeast and central Illinois that must be endured on the way to somewhere else.

About three miles north of St. Anne on Route 1, a yellow traffic sign forewarns drivers of an intersection at the Wichert Road (below), a two-lane road that served decades ago as an access to a once-thriving Wichert business district.



A sign at the Wichert Road points to the First Reformed Church of Wichert about a half-mile east, while another sign identifies Wichert Road as Highway 10, a Kankakee County local route that runs through and beyond Wichert (below).



Wichert, albeit undefined by borders, actually is a community people call home. That's what our family called Wichert when Teunis and Sadie Romein, William and Clara DeMik, and Harry and Elizabeth Romein moved to Wichert and planted our family roots in fertile farm soil. Over the course of twelve years in the early 1900s, our family members, including Harry's and Elizabeth's siblings and their spouses, established their homes and, for most of our family, their livelihood.

We are able to trace our family roots as far back in time as the late 12th Century, to ancients who lived in the area that later would become the Province of Zuid-Holland in Nederland (or South Holland in the English language). Through the centuries, our ancestors lived in every area or Province of the Netherlands.



Teunis Romijn (Teunis Romein) and Sijgie de Haan (Sadie DeHaan) were born in Zuid-Holland, Teunis in 1861 and Sadie in 1859. They were married in 1884 and their second son, Arie (Harry), was born in 1886. In 1890, Teunis and Sadie immigrated to America with Harry and their other sons, Pieter (Peter) and Marius (Martin).

The Romein family initially settled in Roseland, a suburb south of Chicago populated by people of Dutch origin. Their youngest son, Joseph, was born in Roseland. After three years, they moved to South Holland, another Dutch enclave south of Chicago, where they lived nine years. Their daughter, Josephine, was born in South Holland. In 1902, the Romeins moved to Wichert where, with the exception of Joseph, they became farmers.

Both Willem de Mik (William DeMik) and Klaasje van der Lee (Clara Vanderlee) were born in Zuid-Holland, William in 1861 and Clara in 1863. William's family arrived in America in 1870 while Clara's family came in 1873. They settled in Roseland where William and Clara were married in 1886. They had five children, including four boys: John, Garret, Julius, and William. Elizabeth, their second child and only daughter, was born in 1888.

In March of 1911, Harry married Elizabeth in Roseland and they made their home on their farm in Wichert. Julius moved prior to 1911, while the rest of the DeMik family joined them in 1914. With the exception of Garret and Bill, they became farmers.

Harry and Elizabeth's son, Tunis II, was born in Wichert in 1912, and their daughter, Clara, was born there in 1917. Nineteen of their first cousins were born in Wichert as well. Some of the cousins of this generation, as well as those in successive generations, became farmers. Others extended our family roots throughout the nation when they left Wichert to pursue their dreams and their lives elsewhere.

